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## **Arkansas Public School Groups Receive More Than \$1.3 Million**

*Walton Family Foundation grants will strengthen Arkansas public schools*

BENTONVILLE, ARK., June 18, 2013 – Today, the Walton Family Foundation further demonstrated a longstanding commitment to Arkansas public education with \$1.3 million in grants to two organizations working to improve the quality of the state’s K-12 schools. Investing in the two organizations – Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science (AAIMS) and Arkansas Tech University’s Center for Executive Leadership (ACEL) Leader-to-Leader (L2L) program – is part of the foundation’s strategy to increase academic performance of the state’s students.

“The economic well-being of our state depends upon the ability to create an environment where every child in Arkansas has access to a high-quality, publicly funded education,” said Kathy Smith, senior program officer for the foundation’s Arkansas Education Reform initiative. “We believe in preparing students for success with a quality education. When you do, academic expectations grow, graduation rates rise and the standard of living improves. Arkansas has made significant gains in education and we will continue to invest in programs that help raise the academic bar.”

Arkansas Advanced Initiative for Math and Science (AAIMS), will receive \$875,000 to continue growing the number of Advanced Placement (AP) classes available to low income and minority populations. This two-year grant will help the group increase enrollment in AP Math, Science, and English courses with the ultimate goal of increasing the number of qualifying scores on these exams. Previous foundation support for AAIMS is more than \$2.9 million.

“This grant will help us reach more of Arkansas’ most vulnerable students and give them the tools they need to excel at AP courses and in turn prepare them for college. We are proud of the success we’ve had the past four years and look forward to seeing the results of our efforts in the coming years,” said Tommie Sue Anthony, executive director of AAIMS.

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The program has been recognized at least once for the following accomplishments since the program's inception five years ago:

- Fourth in the U.S. for percent increase of students receiving a qualifying score on AP Math, Science and English exams.
- Second in the U.S. for percent increases in African-American and Hispanic students receiving a qualifying score on AP Math, Science and English exams.
- First in the U.S. for the percent increases in African-American and Hispanic students receiving a qualifying score on an AP Math or Science exam.

The second organization, Arkansas Tech University Center for Executive Leadership (ACEL) Leader-to-Leader (L2L) program, will receive more than \$450,000 to continue work in developing strong district and school leaders for Arkansas public schools. The program promotes creative thinking and problem solving by Arkansas' school administrators. With this investment, the foundation has now supported the program with more than \$2.5 million in grants since 2007.

The L2L program conducts a series of "academies" to assist the school and district leaders in obtaining the skills necessary to meet the challenges in the demanding and politically charged world of public education. Specifically the program engages leaders in the following special activities:

- Field trips to other areas of the country in order to study common problems and consider how similar issues are approached in a different context;
- Visits to public charter schools, specialty schools and universities to highlight challenging problem-solving in various contexts;
- A special visioning conference to bring together superintendents with their boards to challenge their perception of what the future holds for public schools; and
- Time spent in the schools and districts of other participants for the purpose of broadening their perspective.

"Through programs such as Leader-to-Leader, faculty from the Arkansas Tech Center for Leadership and Learning are able to provide superintendents and principals from around the state with a valuable forum to share information and learn about innovative methods in school leadership. The work they are doing is helping Arkansas' students achieve greater success in and out of the classroom," said Dr. Robert Brown, president of Arkansas Tech University.

Graduates from the L2L have been engaged in the public policy debate surrounding education reform, and in this past legislative session some testified before the Arkansas General Assembly. The L2L training program develops insights and skills to expertly represent the needs of students and districts on the subject of education reform.

Many influential groups have partnered with L2L to share their expertise and help train the administrators, including the Arkansas Association of Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Arkansas Association of School Administrators, the Arkansas School Boards Association, the Arkansas Department of Education, the Arkansas Public School Resource Center and some 200 schools and school districts across the state. To date L2L has trained approximately 125 practicing Arkansas superintendents and 75 active school principals.

**About the Walton Family Foundation's Home Region Focus Area**

The Walton family has a special commitment to the communities and timeless values that helped launch one of the best-known American success stories. Because of this multigenerational interest, the foundation invests in programs that measurably improve the quality of life by creating cultural, educational, and economic opportunities in northwest Arkansas, throughout the state of Arkansas, and in the Arkansas and Mississippi Delta region. In 2012, the foundation invested more than \$30 million in home region initiatives. For more information, visit the foundation at <http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org> or <http://facebook.com/waltonfamilyfoundation>.

**About the Walton Family Foundation**

When Sam and Helen Walton launched their modest retail business in 1962, one of their goals was to increase opportunity and improve the lives of others along the way. This guiding principle has played a pivotal role in the phenomenal growth of their small enterprise into a global retail leader. This principle also drives the philanthropic mission of the Walton Family Foundation.

Today the foundation is more focused than ever on sustaining the Walton's timeless small-town values and deep commitment to making life better for individuals and communities alike. By working with grantees and collaborating with other philanthropic organizations, the foundation is dedicated to making a positive difference in three focus areas:

- K-12 education reform
- Freshwater and marine conservation
- Quality of life initiatives in our home region

During 2012, the foundation invested \$432 million in domestic and international projects that addressed significant social and environmental issues, and sought to create exciting new opportunities. The foundation continues to implement and expand grant making to fund a positive difference in many diverse communities – and in the lives of the people who call them home. For more information, visit [www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org](http://www.waltonfamilyfoundation.org) or <http://facebook.com/waltonfamilyfoundation>.

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